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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: SECURITY PROBLEMS AT WARSAW'S AIRPORT HIT THE PRESS

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1. (SBU) Summary. In late January 2005, the European Union conducted an airport security assessment at Warsaw's Okecie airport. The EU assessors identified a number of deficiencies at the airport, including two important security problems related to passenger/baggage screening and maintaining the airport's security perimeter. While the EU has not yet released its final report to the Polish Airport (PPL) and Civil Aviation Office (CAO) officials, some of the conclusions of the EU assessment team are public knowledge after a now-former PPL employee released an internal PPL working paper on the EU-identified problems to the Polish press. This public release has upset PPL plans to quietly solve the identified deficiencies per standard EU aviation practice. End summary.

2. (U) Polish press published articles over the weekend of February 5-6, stating that EU inspectors were able to smuggle a knife and explosive material through the airport control gates, that metal detectors are not functioning properly, and that persons without proper ID have access to restricted areas of the airport. One article characterized the findings of the EU assessment as "devastating," with another sporting the headline "Disgrace at Okecie." Reuters wire service also issued an English-language article about the EU assessment and the Polish news coverage that appeared in world-wide media outlets.

3. (SBU) PPL and CAO said many of the deficiencies listed by the EU agency were minor and don't relate directly to security issues. Some infractions were serious, however, and prompted an immediate PPL response. The public disclosures in the press have upset PPL's plans to quietly solve a number of the problems. PPL officials told econoff that, normally, if an airport solves EU-identified deficiencies within four weeks and has that certified by the national CAO, the EU will not include the solved problems in the official report that appears two weeks after the four-week deadline. However, because the airport's security deficiencies are now so well known, PPL does not think that the CAO will certify any solved problems in the coming two weeks.

4. (SBU) PPL security officials, while frustrated by the public disclosure of the airport's problems in the press, regard the EU assessment positively as it has helped them identify areas to improve. PPL said that Polish screeners had never before been actively tested without warning as Polish law does not allow unannounced assessments of screeners, while EU regulations do (PPL understands that Poland will shortly pass a new law to allow such testing by Polish authorities). PPL's Director of Security said that without the EU assessment, they would not have realized how poorly their metal detectors work and the increased level of training needed for the screeners. As a result of the assessment PPL has taken several steps to improve passenger screening, such as starting the purchasing process for 400,000 EUR worth of new walk-through metal detectors, additional training for screeners, and increased coordination of security at non-PPL business sites located at the airport. PPL officials said that they are committed to solving all problems that arise in this and any future assessments and have allocated a budget of 300 million zloty (\$100 million) for security over the next two years to accomplish these tasks.

5. (SBU) PPL said that it, working in concert with CAO, will more closely coordinate the operations and training of security personnel employed by other businesses operating at the airport, including LOT, LOT Catering services, the Polish postal service, and cargo carriers. If these businesses refuse to cooperate, PPL said it would be forced to prevent them from operating at the airport.

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